

VZCZCXRO5370
RR RUEHAST RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAH #1228 3381316
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041316Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0076
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8055
INFO RUCNOSC/OSCE POST COLLECTIVE
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1704
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0445
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0503
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1290
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001228

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY, NICOLAIDIS)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [TX](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN GROUNDS CZECH MILITARY PLANE OVER
WEAPONS

Summary

11. (SBU) Turkmenistan on December 2 grounded at the Ashgabat airport a transiting Czech military plane transporting high-ranking Czech military and civilian officials from Kabul because some on board were carrying weapons. The issue was resolved 14 hours later through diplomatic channels, but the Czech government reportedly intends to raise the issue December 4 with Turkmenistan's delegation at the OSCE Ministerial in Brussels. The Czechs did not ask the embassy for assistance, in this case. In the future, DATT Ashgabat would be happy to assist with providing information on Government of Turkmenistan requirements for overflight and refueling. This incident also underscores the need to observe fully all details of notification requirements. End Summary.

Unfortunate Incident

12. (U) Turkmenistan authorities on December 2 grounded a Czech plane carrying Czech Army Chief of Staff Pavel Stefka, Deputy Defense Minister Martin Bartak, two parliamentarians and four armed bodyguards, who were returning from attending a ceremony turning over command of Kabul's international airport to Czech troops. According to press accounts, Turkmenistan refused to allow the flight to take off after refueling -- notwithstanding the fact that the Czech plane had written permission to land -- because of alleged discrepancies in the plane's manifest, which showed there were weapons on board. Turkmenistan had informed the Czech Embassy in Moscow by fax about its decision to deny refueling December 1 at 20:15 Moscow time, after embassy employees had departed for the weekend, but failed to make any follow-up phone calls. The Czech plane was forced to stand on the runway for 14 hours, until the disagreement was resolved. (Comment: We are not sure but think it highly unlikely the passengers were permitted to deplane. End Comment.) Although the Government of Turkmenistan apologized, Czech authorities have expressed their intention to raise the incident on the fringes of the OSCE Ministerial in Brussels December 4.

Comment

13. (SBU) The Government of Turkmenistan does not accept changes in manifests -- especially those involving weapons, which are banned here. Guns on planes is a particularly sensitive issue because Niyazov believes that is how the guns used in the assassination attempt on him in 2002 were brought into the country. DATT Ashgabat stands ready to assist in providing information on Government of Turkmenistan overflight and refueling procedures. This incident also underscores the importance of observing fully all details of notification requirements. Clearly the Government of Turkmenistan places lesser value on welcoming foreign dignitaries than it does on enforcing its own rules and regulations.

BRUSH